

# **CONNECTICUT STATE POLICE UNION**

Good morning, Senator Maynard, Representative Guererra and Distinguished Members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Andrew Matthews, and I am the President of the Connecticut State Police Union and a Sergeant within the Connecticut State Police. As the Union President, I represent approximately 1,096 State Troopers, Sergeants and Master Sergeants. We are here to speak in OPPOSITION TO:

## **PROPOSED BILL NO. 6540**

### **AN ACT CONCERNING THE GOVERNOR'S HIGHWAY SAFETY PROGRAM.**

In part, Bill #6540 proposes to designate the Department of Transportation as the sole administrator of the State of Connecticut's Highway Safety program and sole coordinator of all "highway safety activities within the state." *We are opposed to this action because we believe it could negatively impact public safety and the safety of Troopers.*

Currently, the Department of Public Safety (DPS) along with the Department of Transportation (DOT) work collaboratively to ensure the safety of the public, visitors and workers (State Troopers and DOT employees) on our highways. The Connecticut State Police plays an essential role by educating the public, taking enforcement action, and reducing highway accidents, injuries and fatalities. As such, the State Police possesses critical knowledge to maintaining and improving "highway safety activities" and should continue to have a prominent role in the process.

Presently, the DPS and DOT apply for and receive substantial federal funding for highway safety programs. Allowing one state agency to control the highway safety programs and activities will result in a reduction in federal funds granted to the DPS, thereby reducing State Police coverage on the highways. As a result, there will be a reduction in law enforcement visibility, enforcement activities, and Troopers working within work zones.

As an example, over the past year DPS has seen a drastic decrease in staffing levels for the (federally funded) Highway Incident Management (HIM) program. This program is regulated by the Federal Highway Safety Administration and DOT. This program was established in 1995 to provide additional police services to respond to the high volume of traffic accidents, disabled and speeding motorist, traffic congestion and fatalities on I-95 between Branford and the New York State line. This section of I-95 is one of the deadliest stretches on the east coast and the increased calls for service have justified the additional staffing levels over the past 15 years. *Recently, DPS reduced the patrol coverage from (12) additional Troopers and (1) additional dispatcher each day, down to (8) additional Troopers and no additional dispatchers. This has affected the response times to calls for service.* DPS informed the State Police Union that the reduction was necessary because DPS had not been reimbursed for nearly \$800,000 of federal funding, which is controlled by DOT.

In closing, the Department of Transportation should not be designated as the sole administrator/coordinator of the State of Connecticut's Highway Safety program. This process should continue to be a collaborative process to allow for the exchange of vital information, suggestions and ideas on ways to improve public safety on our highways. Removing the State Police from any part of a process involving "highway safety activities" seems irresponsible and defeats one of our main missions, which is to protect the motoring public on the highways. Additionally, Connecticut will most likely see a decrease in vehicle enforcement, which may result in less revenue and federal funding. During these difficult financial times, doing more with less, may work in certain areas, but not when it comes to public safety on our highways. *Eventually, this may also result in an increase in serious injuries, accidents and fatalities on our roadways.*

We respectfully request that this committee prevent these changes from occurring and continue to allow for DPS and DOT to continue working together to provide highway safety programs.

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**CONNECTICUT STATE POLICE UNION**  
Andrew Matthews, Esq. – President